

Matthew 7:24-29

So Sweet a Foundation

My son loved Legos. His favorite thing was to build a tower as high as possible. The problem was that he lacked the patience necessary to build a high and strong tower because he didn't want to first build a firm foundation.

Normally, we approach the biblical text in sequential order. That is to say, we prefer to explore verse 1 before exploring verse 2. In this passage, however, the narrative conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount provides necessary insight into the interpretation of this final parable. After finishing the sermon, Jesus stepped down and Matthew gives us the response of the crowd. They "were astonished at his teaching" (vs. 28). The word translated "astonished" (or "amazed" in other translations) comes from a compound Greek word literally meaning "to strike out" (not in the baseball sense). More specifically, it means "to expel by a blow" or even "to be blown away." Interestingly, this word is almost always used in the context of Jesus's teaching (see Matthew 13:54, 19:25, 22:33). Clearly, the crowd heard from Jesus something unique and mesmerizing.

What is most striking is not their amazement, but their lack of action. Matthew tells us they were amazed, not converted; astonished but not repentant; moved but not changed; mesmerized but not transformed. Throughout this sermon, Jesus has called out the entire religious system of Israel along with its leaders. They were leading Israel toward the path of destruction. They were hypocrites who performed for an audience but remained wicked on the inside. On the day of judgment, they will stand before Jesus and marvel that their rituals and religious accomplishments weren't enough. And their only response was to be impressed? In other words, they were building their houses on sand.

To understand the parable, let us begin with the similarities between the two houses, the two builders, and the two destinies. They, for example, shared the same knowledge equally capable of building in according to the local building code regulations. They build their homes in the same neighborhood meaning that whatever affects one house will affect the other. They also share the same experiences. By the looks of everything, these two builders looked the same. What's different is deeper than the superficial.

Although the men had much in common, they couldn't be more different. First, **both men hear, but only one obeys**. The obedient man is described as "wise." To have intellectual knowledge isn't enough. Faith is more than adopting a series of doctrines or truth statements. Unless theology directs our lives, it is an empty theology. Unless the gospel transforms us from the inside, we remain empty. The refusal to obey Christ leads to the foolish works of the foolish man.

Secondly both men build, but only one does so wisely. Its not *that* they built, but *how* they built. The wise man built his house upon the firm foundation of a rock. The foolish man, however, had no firm foundation. What must have been going through the foolish man's mind? Was he so naïve as to think that the water would never rise, the rain would never fall, or that the weather would never get ugly? Perhaps he's naïve ("that will never happen to me") or wanted to take the easy route. Either way, he is a fool.

Finally, **both men suffer, but only one perseveres**. There is debate about what the rock represents. Is it God? Is it Christ? Is it Scripture? What is it exactly? The Kingdom of God via the gospel of Jesus Christ. The house of the wise man is built on the rock of the gospel. That gospel is not only belief, but repentance. A repentance that shows itself in obedience. The gospel is more than just saying we love Jesus but are led toward humble obedience. This man built his house on the true gospel whereby he didn't just admire Jesus or just go through the motions of religion but submitted everything to Christ. He heard, listened, understood, and obeyed. And because of his faith, life, & worldview is shaped by the gospel he's unshakable.

The rain, floods, and wind certainly represent life's many trials and hardships. And notice that both men experience them. This demonstrates that faith is not bubble wrap against hardship. We all suffer. We do not all persevere. But none of that matters to the Rock Man. Since he is firmly planted in the gospel of repentance and obedience, he knows that God is still on His throne, God is still good, God is still in control, God is still a saving God.

The ultimate question is, what foundation is your life built on? Is it the gospel of God's Kingdom or on the hopeless journey of the self? Some reject Christ completely and live a life of misery and aimlessness. Others have cheapened the gospel by buying into an easy believism. It is a pretty house with no foundation. Some have built a precipice of religion that lacks genuine conversion and repentance. All will crumble and fall.

But if your house is built on the rock of the gospel, you will not be free of hardship, but will be able to stand firm when it comes because your focus is not on yourself, but on the glory of God. Moments of trials are moments for God to be glorified through you. Let the light of the gospel shine the brightest when the world is at its darkest.

We all know the story of the Tree Little Pigs; a story that mirrors this final parable from Jesus. What is interesting is how each pig flees to the brick home where they are safe. We have such a haven in Christ. Let the world huff and puff, but we are hidden in the Rock of Ages, cleft for me.

As your State Minister, I, unashamedly, serve the Lord Jesus Christ through the organization of Capitol Commission. Capitol Commission brings gospel hope and spiritual strength to government leaders through prayer presence and proclamation in capitols across the USA and National Ministries Beyond America.